



Federal Legislation Impacting School Counselors

The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program (Title-IV, A)



The Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program is intended to help increase the capacity of State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and local communities to: 1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; 2) improve school conditions for student learning, and 3) improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

LEAs have substantial flexibility in how they utilize the SSAE program funds to provide students access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for student learning, and utilize educational technology. Well-rounded activities may include foreign language programs, college counseling, arts programs, and STEM programs. Activities aimed at improving student learning, health and safety include efforts such as promoting mental health initiatives, school security and safety, parent and community engagement and other school climate activities.

In May 2018, three education groups (*the AASA School Superintendents Association, the National Association of Federal Program Administrators, and Whiteboard Advisors*) surveyed LEAs to learn how they planned to use SSAE funds. Of the 622 districts that responded to the survey, the results are as follows:

- The prevention of cyber bullying and school safety
- Improving access to mental health and counseling services
- Integrating mental health, primary care, family services, and court-ordered treatment
- Using suspicious activity reporting and threat assessments to enhance school safety
- Improving best practices for school building security
- Active shooter preparedness and mitigation

The Mental Health Services for Students Act



On February 8, 2019 Congressional Mental Health Caucus Co-Chairs, Reps. Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA) and John Katko (R-NY), along with 56 original co-sponsors, proudly introduced H.R. 1109, the Mental Health Services for Students Act, to fund on-site mental health services for youth in schools nationwide.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, approximately one in five children have a diagnosable mental illness. It is also estimated that 75 percent of children with emotional and behavioral disorders do not receive specialty mental health services, despite the ability to diagnose these disorders as early as kindergarten in some cases. If passed, this bill would help by partnering with local mental health professionals to establish comprehensive on-site mental health services for students to succeed nationwide

If passed the Mental Health Services for Students Act would:

- Provide access to more comprehensive on-site mental health care services for students and their communities by revising, increasing funding for, and expanding the scope of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) **Project AWARE** Grants for State Educational Agencies which promote youth mental health awareness among schools and communities and improved connections to services for school-age youth.
- Allow teachers to concentrate on teaching by providing comprehensive, culturally and linguistically appropriate services to support students in need of mental health care and those at-risk for behavioral mental health disorders.
- Promote positive mental health education and support for parents, siblings, and other family members of children with mental health disorders, as well as concerned members of the community.
- Create a total of \$200 million in grant funding for schools across the country as well as educate the entire school community on the warning signs and symptoms of mental illness to help identify and treat mental health issues before they escalate.

Trauma-Informed Schools Act



The Trauma-Informed Schools Act would provide criteria for the use of federal funds to support trauma-informed practices in schools. The measure would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 for this purpose.

Trauma-informed practices are evidence-based activities that promote a shared understanding among educators, school leaders and specialized instructional support that traumatic life experiences are common in the lives of children, yet are often not disclosed or reported. This measure would help provide educators and school staff with professional development in areas such as identifying students who exhibit symptoms commonly associated with trauma and anticipating and adapting to the changing needs of those students.

If passed the Trauma-informed Care Act would:

- Train school staff to accompany disciplinary actions with holistic assessments and interventions to address the underlying causes of student behavior, including trauma.
- Avoid harsh and punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices.
- Integrate activities that promote a culture of acceptance that connects a student to the school community and provides multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills.
- Train school staff to utilize evidence-based restorative practices that build a culture of trust.
- Train school staff to use evidence-based practices to holistically address the needs of each student who has experienced trauma in a culturally sustaining manner.